

Leviticus 19:16-37 - Thursday, January 21st, 2010

- Last week we only made it to verse 15 and tonight will pick it up in verse 16 and Lord willing we'll get through to the end of the chapter.
- It is a most interesting chapter because the "nuts and bolts" issues that the Israelites were faced with then, are what we also face now.

16 You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD.

- The Lord now deals with gossip and slander amongst His people. Simply put, don't do it. Why? Because it causes irreparable damage.
- If you were to ask me what one of the greatest threats to the wellbeing of a church body is, it would have to be this one thing; gossip.
- In the hand of the enemy, a Christian who gossips is the most powerful tool in his toolbox. With it, he can dismantle an entire church.

One commentator said it this way; "Satan is the inventor and initiator of gossip. In the very beginning Satan used slander in an attempt to destroy the reputation of God in the eyes of Eve by accusing God of evil motives (Genesis 3:1-5). He accused Job of weakness before God (Job 1:1). So it's no wonder that is called "the devil" or "the accuser." Christians who gossip are being used by Satan to destroy the church from within. Knowingly or unknowingly, Christians are pawns of Satan when they accuse brethren and create distrust and disunity within the family of God; they, like puppets, are being manipulated in an attempt to frustrate the mission of Christ. We must recognize the destruction that gossip brings to the church; not only must we keep our own mouths closed, but we must also close the mouths of others. Since Satan uses gossip to destroy a congregation, we must not allow it to go unchecked."

Of a slanderer Adam Clarke writes; "A more despicable character exists not: such a person is a pest to society, and should be exiled from the habitations of men."

Proverbs 16:28 A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends. NIV

One wrote an interesting parable to illustrate the irreparable damage that gossip and slander can cause someone individually and the church corporately. It goes like this: A young man spread a rumor that later proved to be misleading about an elderly preacher. The rumor split the church and created a scandal. The young man later apologized and asked what he could do to atone for his wrong. The preacher took a feather pillow under his arm and escorted the boy to the top of the church tower. The wind tugged at their hair and flapped at their clothing as they looked at the village and the fields below. The preacher handed the young man the pillow and said, "Rip it open." The boy was perplexed, but he did as he was told. Instantly the wind seized the feathers, tossing them in flurries about their heads, then spread far and wide as thousands of feathers began falling beyond the village settling on sidewalks, in hedges, streams, trees, and among deep grass. "Now," said the preacher, "go and collect all the feathers and put them back in the pillow." "All of them?" "All of them!" "But that's impossible," said the young man. Placing his hand on the boy's shoulder, the preacher said kindly, "I know. I wanted you to realize how impossible it is to retrieve a rumor once it is made." Yes, gossip causes irreparable damage.

Proverbs 11:13 A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret. NIV

A man by the name of J. C. Bays told this story: "One day when I was about eight years old, I was playing by an open window and I heard Mrs. Brown confide in my mother a serious problem concerning her son. When Mrs. Brown was gone, my mother, realizing I had heard everything, said to me, 'If Mrs. Brown had left her purse here today, would we give it to someone else?' 'Of course not,' I replied. Then she continued: 'Mrs. Brown left something far more precious to her than her purse today. That story is not ours to give to anyone else. It's still hers, even though she left it. So we should not give it to anyone else. Do you understand?' I did. And I still understand that when someone leaves a bit of confidence or careless gossip with me, it is his—not mine to give to anyone else."

17 You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.

- It's no wonder that the Lord would say this after talking about slander especially when He says; "You shall surely rebuke your neighbor."
- He even takes it a step further and says that if we don't do this, it's likely because we hate them in our hearts, thus we will bear the guilt.
- I think the reason for this is because we'll surely gossip about someone but we won't "surely rebuke" them, especially when they gossip.

18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

- Now He goes from talking about rebuking our neighbor to loving our neighbor as much as we already love ourselves.
- If we love our neighbor in that way, we will neither take vengeance against them, nor bear any grudge against them.
- Actually, if we really love them as much as we love ourselves, we will then speak the truth to them, in that love that we have for them.

Ephesians 4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. NIV

"We must not hesitate to rebuke sin. This needs deep humility, tact, the removal of the beam from one's own eye, the love of Christ for souls; but how much might be done if we would stay the little rift within the lute! We must not bear a grudge. All, this is hard! To feel hurt, to take offence, to be cold and stiff, to stand at a distance, how many of us fail here! But we must act and speak to others in the power of God's Love, as we would do if there were no grudge within."

F.B. Meyer Devotionals on Leviticus (http://preceptaustin.org/leviticus_sermon_illustrations_2.htm)

19 'You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. You shall not sow your field with mixed seed. Nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you.

- These laws of purity were in response to that which the pagans would practice and God does not want the Israelites imitating them.
- What they would do is mix different species of livestock, seeds, and fabrics because they believed it would have mystical powers.

20 'Whoever lies carnally with a woman who is betrothed to a man as a concubine, and who has not at all been redeemed nor given her freedom, for this there shall be scourging; but they shall not be put to death, because she was not free. 21 And he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, a ram as a trespass offering. 22 The priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before the LORD for his sin which he has committed. And the sin which he has committed shall be forgiven him.

- This speaks of a slave girl who has had a sexual relationship with a man other than her fiancé not receiving the death penalty.
- The thought is that if she was free, she could resist or be protected by her father. In this case she's a slave and thus isn't culpable.
- However, a sacrifice still had to be made as a trespass offering before the Lord for the sin which had been committed by the man.

23 'When you come into the land, and have planted all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as uncircumcised. three years it shall be as uncircumcised to you. It shall not be eaten. 24 But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, a praise to the LORD. 25 And in the fifth year you may eat its fruit, that it may yield to you its increase: I am the LORD your God.

- This is really interesting because woven into this command to not eat the fruit from the trees for the first three years is excellent advice.
- It's been proven that trees which are not allowed to bear fruit for the first three years are infinitely more productive in the 4th and 5th year.
- There is a principle here that I believe has profound application to our lives. When we give the best to the Lord, we're more productive.

26 'You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying.

- This is very clear in that any form of divination, magic, or astrology or rituals of eating anything with blood were explicitly forbidden.

27 You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard.

- It is because of this verse that the Jews to this day, have the curls on the sides of their heads, and the long untrimmed beards.
- Again, this was for the purpose of not allowing the Israelites to imitate the pagan practices of their day, as this is what they would do.

28 You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD.

- When the Egyptian's were in mourning, they would practice certain rituals all for the sake of the one who had died.
- These rituals included shaving their hair and beards in a certain way, cutting their flesh, and putting tattoo's on their bodies.
- Naturally this brings up the question of those who have tattoos, even after coming to Christ. Some even have Christian tattoos.

29 'Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry, and the land become full of wickedness.

- It's important to remember from our previous studies, that sex and even prostitution was a form of pagan worship in their culture.
- Actually, when you went to the temple of this pagan god, you would engage in sexual practices with the "temple prostitutes."
- God is forbidding this practice for what would be deemed obvious reasons, the land would become full of harlotry and wickedness.

30 'You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD. 31 'Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

- This has to do with another pagan practice of their day. They would try to contact the dead by using certain mediums.
- Is it just me, or is there a renewed interest in this occultic practice today. I've noticed an increase in television programs about this.

32 'You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD.

- I love this verse, especially as I get older and grayer. God is saying that the youth should stand in honor and respect of an "old man."

33 'And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. 34 The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

- Why would God insert this reminder in the context of requiring that they be holy as He is Holy? Because, to be holy requires humility.
- He's saying that they need to remember the humble beginnings from which they came as strangers in the land, when treating strangers.
- I think that one of the marks of a truly godly man or woman, is how they treat others, especially strangers or foreigners in their midst.

35 'You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume. 36 You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

- You get the impression that God is requiring equity, integrity and honesty. If we want to be holy, we have to have integrity.

37 'Therefore you shall observe all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them: I am the LORD."

- The therefore is there for a reason. We're to both observe and perform all of God's laws because He says; "I am the Lord."
- He says; "I am the Lord" fifteen times in this chapter in order to serve as a reminder that He is Who He says He is, and He is holy!
- Here's how I see it; "we want to be like the people we like." This is the key to our obedience to God's command to be holy.

- I will be obedient to God in as much as I love God. If I love Him I'll obey Him thus if I love Him I'll want to emulate Him and be like Him.
- At the beginning of this study I mentioned that a topical title for this chapter could be "Characteristics of a Godly and Holy Life."
- So I would like to end this study the way that we began this study and sort of recap all of the characteristics of godliness and holiness.

Characteristics of Godliness and Holiness

1. A desire for holiness
2. A submitting to authority
3. A heart of worship
4. A freshness of fellowship
5. A keeping of confidentiality
6. A forgiveness of heart
7. A concern for the poor
8. A purity in practice
9. A fruitfulness in labor
10. A sanctification in identification
11. A stand for truth